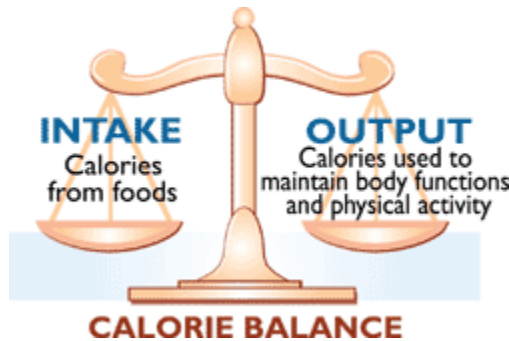


How Do I Get Started?

1. Understand Calorie Balance

Whether you want to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, it helps to understand the connection between the calories you take in (through the foods you eat and the beverages you drink) and the calories your body uses (through normal body functions, daily activities, and physical activity).



Calorie balance is like a scale. To remain in balance and maintain your body weight, the calories you consume (from food and beverages) must be balanced by the calories you use (in normal body function and physical activity). If you want to lose weight, you need to take in fewer calories than you burn.

2. Set Some Realistic Goals for Change

The first step is to determine a realistic weight goal and then to set some *SMALL STEP* goals for **weight loss**, **dietary choices** and **physical activity**. Most people trying to lose weight focus on just losing weight; however, the best areas to focus on are the dietary and exercise changes that will lead to that long-term weight loss.

A. Weight Loss

To lose weight safely and permanently, plan to lose between $\frac{1}{2}$ and 2 pounds a week by taking in 300 to 500 fewer calories per day than usual and by increasing the amount of time you spend being physically active.

B. Healthy Diet

The Dietary Guidelines describe a "healthy diet" as one that

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products;
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts;

- Is low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars, and
- Stays within daily calorie needs.

How Can I Make My Diet Healthier?

- Focus on [fruits](#).
- Vary your [veggies](#).
- Get your [calcium-rich](#) foods.
- Make half your [grains](#) whole.
- Go lean with protein

How Many Calories Should I Have Each Day?

Here are two ways you can find out:

1. Go to USDA's new website, www.MyPyramid.gov, where you have an individual weight loss plan developed for you. Once you've entered your information and picked the healthier weight option, you will get a plan with the amounts to eat from each food group every day. You can print your plan as well as a worksheet to track your daily progress. The worksheet also lets you set a food and activity goal for tomorrow.
or
2. Use the chart below to determine the number of calories you need each day to maintain your current weight. Then subtract between 300 and 500 calories from that number to see how many calories you can eat or drink to lose ½ to 2 pounds of weight per week.